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SUBJECT: EUR/PDAS RIES DISCUSSIONS WITH EU ON TURKEY'S  
ACCESSION BID

Classified By: USEU External Affairs Officer Andrew Erickson  
for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: EUR/PDAS Charlie Ries visited Brussels on March 30 to review EU Commission concerns on specific Copenhagen Criteria issues, with the aim of working with the EU and Turkey to achieve a positive decision on a Turkish date for accession negotiations in December. Matthias Reute, DG Enlargement Director for Turkey, Bulgaria, and Romania told Ries that there are five specific areas where further improvement is needed. These are the judiciary, protection of fundamental freedoms, civil-military relations, enjoyment of cultural freedoms, and southeast Turkey. Ruete reiterated that implementation in all areas remains spotty, but expressed a general view that the "glass" of Turkish reform can increasingly be seen as "half full" as opposed to "half empty".

12. (C) Summary (continued): Ruete specifically requested U.S. help in pressuring Turkey to meaningfully reform its economy, and to push the GOT hard to ensure civilian control of the military. Ruete (strictly protect) also offered his private political assessment of hold-outs against Turkish accession. (He included France, the Netherlands, and Austria in this group, but also expressed a growing concern about Denmark.) In a subsequent lunch with a wider range of interlocutors, Ries reviewed these points, and pushed the EU hard on the need to (a) either ensure that the Republic of Cyprus votes yes to the Annan Plan; or, (b) not penalize Turkey in the event that the ROC blocks a Cyprus settlement in the eleventh hour. End summary.

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"We're here to help"  
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13. (C) EUR/PDAS Charlie Ries visited Brussels on March 30, accompanied by US Embassy Ankara Econ Counselor Scot Marciel, to review EU Commission concerns on specific Copenhagen Political Criteria issues with a view towards offering behind-the-scenes U.S. assistance to the GOT in its efforts to meet the Copenhagen Criteria. Ries met for two hours with Matthias Reute, EU Commission Director, Pre-Accession, DG Enlargement. Ruete told Ries that there are five specific areas where further improvement is needed. He identified these as the judiciary, protection of fundamental freedoms, civil-military relations, enjoyment of cultural freedoms, and southeast Turkey. Ruete noted that implementation in all areas remains spotty. (See septel for a specific review of concerns addressed in a preparatory working-level meeting on March 29.)

14. (C) Ruete was receptive to Ries' message of U.S. willingness to assist with Turkey in ensuring that the Copenhagen Political Criteria are met. He noted that there has been a significant change of tone from Turkey since the Erdogan government came to power, and this new discourse has been welcomed by the European Union. Ruete said that where previously the basis of Turkey's arguments for EU membership had been perceived by the Commission to be "you owe us a date" the current Turkish government made a more persuasive case to the Commission by relying on arguments based upon the mutual benefits to the EU and to Turkey that would accrue in the event of eventual Turkish accession. "It's been a silent revolution", he told Ries.

15. (C) Ruete said there continues to be debate in public opinion about whether the cup of Turkish reform is half full or half empty. In his view, U.S. assessments of Turkish democratic process that focused on "the water level of the glass" were a helpful contribution to the internal EU debate; overt US pressure on the EU to accede to Turkish demands was not. He cited EU domestic blowback on the State Department's annual human rights report as one irritant; the report had put his office in a difficult position as many suggested that the U.S. was being more critical than the Commission on Turkey's human rights record. While public opinion would react negatively to perceived U.S. pressure, positive U.S. assessments of Turkish progress on human rights reform would be helpful as long as they were not explicitly linked to EU's decision in December. Finally, Ruete noted he sees that "the glass is filling up" in terms of Turkey's fulfillment of the Copenhagen Criteria. Challenges nonetheless remain and more

action was needed.

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Specific Religious &  
Cultural Freedoms  
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16. (C) Ruete noted that a significant difficulty for Turkey is that the EU criteria are "soft" to the extent that there is no one EU model for Turkey to implement; in fact, there are fifteen EU models, and the GOT must find a model of religious and cultural freedom that addresses the spirit of the EU approach of respect for individual-rights. This was both a challenge for Turkey (because there is no one model to implement), and an opportunity (because the GOT can invent a model appropriate for Turkey, provide it respects the spirit of the EU's rights-based approach). Ruete added that the Council of Europe's guidelines and suggestions could be very useful resource for Turkey in this regard.

17. (C) Ruete's overall critique of the Turkish approach was the GOT's need to move from a "statist," authoritarian approach, to a mentality respectful of individual liberty. Noting that limitations on religious freedom in Turkey remain a significant problem, he nonetheless expressed sympathy with the GOT argument that increasing the rights of religious organizations could open the door to Saudi-financed Wahabbist madrassah. This is in turn could lead to a rise in Islamist radicalism in Turkey, the Turks argue. On the Halki Seminary, Ruete noted that the GOT continues to insist that it be attached to the religion faculty of the University of Istanbul; Ruete was receptive to Ries' idea of exploring a compromise that would attach Halki to a private college in Istanbul, instead of a government institution. Ruete stressed that the treatment of non-Muslim religions was of key concern to many of the EU Member States. Almost a quarter of his briefing book for a recent meeting with Turkish officials was devoted to this subject.

18. (C) Ruete was very critical on GOT implementation of cultural freedoms. The area of non-Turkish language broadcasting was "one of the government's real defeats" of the past few months; the law on non-Turkish language broadcasting simply imposed unacceptable burdens on those attempting to broadcast in Kurdish. The broadcasting board was also hostile to Kurdish broadcasting, and needed a change in personnel (which is reportedly in the works). Recalcitrant bureaucrats were also unacceptably stalling Kurdish language education. The GOT was simply not doing what it needed to do in this area of reform. When asked whether minority language broadcasting had been an issue in the Commission's recommendations on starting accession negotiations with Hungary and Romania, Ruete said he was not sure as this issue had not had the same degree of prominence.

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Of particular concern: civil -  
military relations, the economy  
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19. (C) Ruete had a broad set of concerns on civil-military relations. The GOT needed to enhance the transparency of the military budget, addressing the question of off-budget military funding. It also needed to remove the military representatives from the education and audiovisual boards. A GOT appointment of a civilian head of the National Security Council this summer would also be helpful. Ruete added that he wasn't sure that "a general can be fired by a civilian"; indeed, he was concerned that Turkish generals are not vetted by the civilian establishment. Ruete told Ries that he thought that the U.S. could be helpful with the GOT in this area in particular, through frank dialogue with Turkish officials.

10. (C) Another key area where the U.S. could be influential, Ruete hoped, was the Turkish economy, which Ruete characterized as "awful". In pharmaceuticals, IPR, and telecommunications, the GOT was behaving terribly. On import liberalization, Ruete said that the "Turks are behaving like the French in the seventies". Under the circumstances, Turkey remained incapable of raising foreign direct investment, and this had a negative impact on Turkey's accession quest. "If Turkey's GDP were at sixty percent of the EU average, public opinion would be much more favorable to Turkish accession", Ruete said. Economic reform was the only way to improve Turkish economic performance.

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Getting to yes - the  
political landscape  
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11. (C) While optimistic about the Commission issuing a positive report card on Turkey's fulfillment of the Copenhagen Criteria, Ruete warned that the political obstacles to a date remain. "On some member states, very

clearly, there are big question marks. Go to Paris, you won't find one senior official who won't tell you its crazy to begin negotiations. However they won't say this publicly as they are waiting to see what position Chirac will adopt". The Netherlands and Austria remain problematic, he said, before noting that he was also a "little bit" concerned about the trend in Denmark, where an influential official has been raising new concerns over torture and ill treatment of prisoners. He was more sanguine about Germany; in his view, the opposition would change its position once in power. The question for Germany was whether Germany wants "German-speaking Turkish engineers or English-speaking Indian engineers" to address its long-term demographic gap. Finally, Ruete was confident that the new accession states would be favorable for a date.

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Annan Plan Impact  
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112. (C) In a subsequent lunch with a wide range of EU officials dealing with Turkey and Cyprus, Ries reviewed these points, and pushed the EU hard on the need to (a) either ensure that the Republic of Cyprus votes yes to the Annan Plan; and to, (b) not penalize Turkey in the event that the ROC blocks a Cyprus settlement in the eleventh hour. Ries suggested a number of ways that the EU could actively campaign for a "yes" vote in the south, and heard EU interlocutors add some ideas of their own, including high level statements of support from Greek and EU political leaders, joint visits to the island on the eve of the elections, and a clear message to the Greek Cypriots that there would be consequences to a no vote. Reute offered the argument that a settlement would statistically decrease Cyprus' per capita GDP making the island as a whole, and the Greek Cypriot south, eligible for a greater share of EU structural funds. Interlocutors were divided on the consequences to Turkey's accession quest of a no vote on the Annan Plan by the south; it was generally agreed, however, that a no vote would have a negative impact on Turkey's candidacy. Ries pushed back hard on this point, saying that it would be unacceptable for the international community to punish Turkey for the Greek Cypriots' failure to accept a peace plan.

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